Abstract

A platform for supporting negotiation between parties to achieve an outcome, the platform comprising: a party goal program unit for:defining respective party's goal programs in respect of said outcome, said goal program comprising a plurality of objective functions and constraints associated with respective objective functions, for associating each of said objective functions with one of a plurality of levels of importance, and for assigning to objective functions within each level a respective importance weighting, said party goal program unit comprising a party input unit for allowing a party to provide data for a respective goal program, a goal program unifier, associated with said party goal program unit for receiving goal programs of respective parties, and carrying out unification of said goal programs by considering said objective functions objectivewise and levelwise with associated constraints in the respective goal programs to determine whether two goal programs have a common field of interest from which a mutually compatible outcome is derivable, a negotiator associated with said goal program unifier for receiving goal programs of respective parties, and carrying out negotiations using said goal programs by considering said objective functions objectivewise and levelwise with associated constraints in the respective goal programs to arrive at said mutually compatible outcome by carrying out minimization firstly objectivewise and then levelwise, therewith to form an offer, an output unit for offering said unified goal program to said respective parties, and a response receiver for receiving from respective parties either counter offers or acceptances, said response receiver being operable to provide counter offers as new goal programs to said goal program negotiator for further unification.